

Message Text

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ACTION AF-18

INFO OCT-01 EUR-25 ADP-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-09 H-02

INR-10 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-10 PA-03 RSC-01 PRS-01 SS-15

USIA-12 AID-20 CU-04 COME-00 EB-11 LAB-06 SIL-01 SY-10

OPR-02 RSR-01 NIC-01 /166 W
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R 091655 Z MAY 73

FM AMEMBASSY TUNIS

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 1812

INFO AMEMBASSY PARIS

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E. O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: PINS, TS

SUBJECT: STUDENT STRIKE, CONTINUES, BUT UNEVENLY

REF: TUNIS 2526

1. GOT MINISTRY OF EDUCATION HAS SO FAR TAKEN RELAXED ATTITUDE TOWARD GENERAL STRIKE AT UNIVERSITY, WHICH CONTINUES IN SOME FACULTIES BUT NOT IN ALL. GOT SEEMS IN FAIRLY STRONG POSITION -- AND STUDENTS FOR MOMENT HAVE RELATIVELY LESS LEVERAGE -- SINCE CLASSES END ON MAY 18 ANYWAY AND FINAL EXAMINATIONS SCHEDULED MAY 28. NEW MINISTER OF EDUCATION DRISS GUIGA HAS LEFT RESPONSE TO STRIKE UP TO UNIVERSITY ITSELF AND SPECIFICALLY TO VARIOUS FACULTY DEANS. RESULTS HAVE BEEN MIXED.

2. OF THREE LARGEST SCHOOLS, FACULTY OF SCIENCE REPORTEDLY REMAINS OPEN, BUT NUMBER OF STUDENTS ATTENDING CLASSES NOT KNOWN, FACULTY OF LAW AND POLITICAL AND ECONOMIC SCIENCES HAS BEEN FORMALLY CLOSED DOWN FOR BALANCE OF TERM BY ORDER OF DEAN. STRIKE REPORTEDLY CONTINUED IN FULL FORCE IN FACULTY OF ARTS AND LETTERS, WITH NO CLEAR RESPONSE YET FROM
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FACULTY ADMINISTRATION. WE HAVE UNCONFIRMED REPORT OF POLICE- STUDENT CLASHES AT ARTS AND LETTES CAMPUS ON MAY 8, BUT MATTERS SEEM MORE QUIET TODAY(MAY 9.)

3. UNIVERSITY PROFESSORS HAVE HELD SEVERAL LONG BUT INCONCLUSIVE MEETINGS IN PAST SEVERAL DAYS. PORTION OF FACULTY WISHES DECLARE SOLIDARITY WITH STUDENTS ON POLITICAL GROUNDS; ANOTHER FACTION FAVORS OPPOSING STRIKE FOR ACADEMIC REASONS.

4. KNOWLEDGEABLE AND RELIABLE SOURCE ON FACULTY BELIVES THAT GOT WILL CONTINUE TO LET MATERS RIDE WITHOUT PROVOKING CONFRONTATION WITH STUDENTS, SO LONG AS STUDENT ACTIVITIES CONFINED TO UNIVERSITY CAMPUS. IF STUDENTS ATTEMPT DEMONSTRATE IN TOWN, HOWEVER, IT IS LIKELY THAT SECURITY FORCES WOULD INTERVENE QUICKLY AND FORCEFULLY, AS THEY DID SEVERAL DAYS AGO WHEN STUDENTS ATTEMPTED DEMONSTATE IN SOLIDARITY WITH STRIKING TRANSPORT WORKERS.

5. COMMENT: SITUATION THIS REMAINS RELATIVELY CALM ON SURFACE, BUT COULD EASILY DETERIORATE AGAIN. STUDENTS HAVE BEEN ABLE TO SEE THIS YEAR THAT POSSIBILITIES ARE OPEN FOR JOINT ACTION WITH STRIKING WORKERS; THUS ANOTHER WILDCAT STRIKE (WHICH CANNOT BE EXCLUDED) COULD LIGHT FUSE ONCE AGAIN. STUDENTS HAVE ALSO NOTED THAT -- AS OPPOSED TO STUDENT DEMONSTRATIONS LAST YEAR -- THEY SEEM TO ELICIT MORE FAVORABLE RESPONSE FROM PEOPLE IN TUNIS. A NUMBER OF OBSERVERS HAVE REMARKED ON THIS DEVELOPMENT. GOT MAY WELL BE CORRECT IN ASSUMING THAT CURRENT STUDENT DIFFICULTIES WILL ONCE MORE FADE INTO BACKGROUND AS EXAMINATIONS AND SUMMER VACATION APPROACH. BUT GOVERNMENT WILL ALSO HAVE NOTED THAT STUDENT GRIEVANCES ARE MORE FRANKLY AND OPENLY POLITICAL THAN PREVIOUSLY, WHICH IS OF COURSE WARNING SIGN FOR FUTURE.

SEELYE

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